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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the increasing cooperation between university business schools and foreign language departments in establishing effective language programs for business students, focusing on the development of a computer-assisted language learning course in business Spanish at the University of Texas, Austin. The course utilizes HyperCard computer card files of information in Spanish and English on six Venezuelan companies, based on transcripts of interviews with employees of the companies. The student can retrieve information about individual companies, specific employees and their jobs, translations of passages into English, pronunciation, usage, and grammar. The course is designed for intermediate-level students with a basic knowledge of Spanish who would like to learn business vocabulary and usage. The benefits of such a course to the business school and the foreign language department are also discussed. Samples of HyperCard files are provided. (MDM)

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ED 370 383

Bridging the Gap: Bringing Business and Liberal Arts Together Via Computer Assisted Instruction

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Introduction

In a sense, this article deals with a sensitive topic, namely, the traditional academic perceptions that Business Schools have towards Liberal Arts programs and the perceptions that Liberal Arts scholars and teachers have towards Business Schools. It is quite evident that over the past few years there has been an increase in the level of interest in foreign languages among business students and within the business community. American business practices are shifting towards integration rather than isolation. Concurrent with this new perspective in the business world, those involved with Liberal Arts and language teaching are also going through a transition period. Proficiency-based language learning is becoming the standard by which language programs are evaluated. Language learners have higher expectations. It is not acceptable to simply provide two years of language training. Results, i.e., students who can actually speak the foreign language, identify a successful program. In this brief article I discuss some of the ramifications of these transitions in Business and in Liberal Arts, as well as our experience in working together to create computer assisted materials for the teaching of Business Spanish.

To become proficient in a second language is not easily achieved. From a business standpoint, in the past it simply has not been cost effective to dedicate the time, the money and the effort necessary to learn a foreign language. This is especially true given the poor results and low levels of language proficiency students have obtained. Consequently it is not surprising that many Business Schools do not have language requirements for their students.

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The stereotypical perception of Business Schools regarding language teaching has been that it is of secondary importance. Many American companies feel that it is easier to teach accounting a bilingual Japanese than to teach Japanese to an American accountant. Concurrent with this perception, the Liberal Arts perception of Business Schools has been one of almost resentment. After all, the underlying feeling, whether openly expressed or not, has been that the Business Schools have all the financial resources to built their programs and Liberal Arts programs have to wait in line to see what is left.

MBA Language Needs

Given the need for foreign language proficiency, Business Schools are now taking the initiative to incorporate language teaching once again -- as part to their Business curriculum. For example, in a recent proposal prepared by the Business School at the University of Texas, Austin there was an interesting line which read:

> In order to respond to our students, and more importantly, to provide even greater global expertise within our business curriculum, CIBER (Center for International Business Education and Research) has been working with faculty from foreign language departments to investigate options for greater incorporation of language instruction into the graduate curriculum of the Graduate School of Business.

This statement truly demonstrates a change in perception and need. The Business School has approached the foreign language departments with updated goals and is looking for help to achieve them. Up to this point many foreign language departments have responded incredulously. I personally have heard some language instructors say in effect, "We tried to approach the Business School years ago and they didn't want our help then, we can't believe that they want it now." For this very reason it is important that foreign language educators listen to the Business Schools' descriptions which explain why foreign language education has not met the needs of business students in the past. To wit, a few of the reasons are listed as follows:

1. The focus of language courses (formal grammar, literature, writing, reading) is not consistent with goals of Business students (business vocabulary, negotiating skills, cultural adaptation,etc.).
2. Language instructors generally do not have an expertise in business language.
3. Language courses are mainly comprized of under-graduate students who do not have the same interest, motivation and abilities of the Business students.

During an address given at the1992 CIBER Conference on Teaching Foreign Languages for Business Purposes, Richard Lambert offered this advice, "If we are truly interested in successful business/liberal arts education, we must take a hard look at what corporations actually want and what their employees need, looked at from their perspective. I believe that the results of such an investigation may call for a radical change in the what we teach and how we package it." The National Foreign Language Center has conducted a very informative study regarding the foreign language needs of U.S.-based corporations (Fixman 1989). Among other things, their study suggests that corporations consider cross-cultural understanding to be more important than mere foreign language ability. They also feel that people in business who can deal only in their own language are blinded by a narrow perspective. I highly recommend that the interested reader take time to become familiar with Fixman's report.

Given the new shifts in business and language goals, we may summarize as follows: 1) Business Schools have an increased desire to include foreign language education into their curriculum; 2) foreign language educators have an increased emphasis in successful language teaching; 3) Business Schools have made the initiative to seek foreign language teacher's advice on how to reach their new objectives; and finally, 4) foreign language education for Business students needs to be presented in a new way, i.e., based on the needs of what corporations really want their employees to do. Let us turn our focus to how some of these objectives may be addressed through greater implementation of computer-assisted language instruction (CALI). Joint preparation and

implementation of computer-generated language teaching materials is one way to bridge the gap between the Business student's needs and the foreign language instructor's capacity to teach. In this discussion I hope to illustrate how the Business School at the University of Texas, Austin has coordinated with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese to oversee the development of a language course in Business Spanish, including the use of HyperCard stacks for the instruction of business vocabulary.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Whenever the topic of computer-assisted language learning is addressed, it is important to emphasize the word "assisted." In our society computers assist workers in many ways, they really do not replace workers. This is also true of computer-assisted language teaching. They serve as an aid to language teaching and should not be thought of as a substitute for language teaching. Given the new technological advances that are part of everyday business practices (faxes, telephone conferencing, etc.), it is only natural that these advances become part of a teaching curriculum. For example, if communication (and especially foreign language communication) is carried out via electronic mail networks, then foreign language educators should include this mode of communication into their foreign language instruction. At the same time, as language teachers and materials developers, our main concern is to identify what materials are lacking for business students. Computers become part of the teaching process only after the identification of materials has been made. In other words, we have to resist implementing computers just because they happen to be available.

One of the identifiable needs of business students in language courses is to learn specific and technical vocabulary, i.e., banking, investment, insurance, import, export, realty, etc. Additionally, one of the greatest challenges is to learn the correct usage of these technical terms, whether it be in oral negotiating, written correspondence, or in reading large volumes of text. It bares repeating that the identification of this need begins in the Business School. The issue is then transferred to the language department. Language educators cannot be expected to

know these needs for business anymore than for language for legal purposes, scientific purposes or medical purposes. In our case, we jointly arrived at the conclusion that our Business Spanish class could be enhanced with HyperCard stacks which provide business students with multiple examples of specific vocabulary in a context-rich environment.

As the idea evolved, we decided to base the HyperCard stacks on transcripts of original audio samples from native speakers who talked of their employment and their work experiences in business settings. These HyperCard stacks have the advantage of being flexible enough for class use as well as being individual enough for self-paced study. I frequently take students to Latin America to participate in study abroad programs and this conveniently provided for an opportunity to make the audio recordings. Upon returning from Latin America with the audio recordings, it was time to write the computer programs. The Business School assisted the Spanish department by upgrading some computer supplies, which were then donated to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Since the Spanish department did not have funds to buy a new computer, the Business School helped make arrangements for a Business Spanish course for non-students. Members of the community joined the course which not only served as a training ground for the materials that were recorded in Latin America, but also provided enough money to buy a new computer. As a result of this course for the community, not only was there a link between the Business School and the Spanish Department, but the non-university community was also involved and benefited from the instruction, materials, and contact.

It is important to emphasize the cooperation, give and take, and teamwork in the process just described. The materials were developed through a joint effort in which each department was allowed to work within their own expertise. Before continuing and in order to get a feel for the cooperation that existed in this project, it may be helpful to describe in more detail the HyperCard stack "Un día típico de trabajo."

HyperCard Stack: "Un día típico de trabajo"

Many readers are already familiar with HyperCard which is available on almost all Macintosh computers. HyperCard is a

computerized version of file cards that are stored in stacks. Each card of the stack may contain various fields (where items are written) and buttons (which cause some action to happen). As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the stacks for "Un día típico de trabajo" are based on transcripts

of audio interviews with employees from six different companies in Venezuela: National Rent-A-Car (Commercial), Banco de Lara (Banking), Seguros Cordillera (Insurance), Chestnut Hill Farms (Import), Inmovivienca (Real Estate) and Lo Novedoso del Bambú (Manufacturing).

Figure 1 about here

The user may click the mouse on any of the companies listed to see a menu of the employees and their jobs. For example, Figure 2 shows the card which lists the employees of Chestnut Hill Farms.

Figure 2 about here

By clicking on any of the employees, the user is sent to the main stack which looks like the card illustrated in Figure 3. The name of the company and the name of the employee are found at the left corner of the card and a portion of the transcript is written at the right side of the card. Along the bottom row there is a series of nine buttons which are designed to help the student understand the transcript and move around the stacks.

Figure 3 about here

The four buttons "traducción" (translation), "pronuncia" (pronunciation), "lenguaje" (usage), and "gramática" (grammar) all open pop-up windows on the left side of the card. The translation button provides a complete English rendition of the Spanish transcript. The pronunciation button not only describes specific characteristics of the employee's speech, but also provides two "Escuchar" buttons to listen to samples of the items described. (Note: at a later date a complete recording of the transcripts will be available on CD-ROM. At this time, however, the students have access to the cassette recordings of the interviews). The usage button explains idiomatic expressions and other characteristics of oral speech. Finally the grammar button takes examples from the transcript to reinforce advanced grammar items, such as Spanish reflexive pronouns, subjunctive, etc. The effect of these

buttons is illustrated in Figure 4 (translation), Figure 5 (usage), and Figure 6 (pronunciation).

Figure 4 about here

Figure 5 about here

Figure 6 about here

There is also a help button which provides the user with a description of the organization of the stacks and the function of each of the buttons (Figure 7).

Figure 7 about here

The review and study of the transcripts are designed for intermediate-level students who are already capable of speaking basic Spanish and would now like to focus on vocabulary and usage that is found in a business setting. At the same time, more advanced students enjoy the tapes and transcripts even more because of the nuances in usage, culture, and pronunciation. Student feedback has been very positive. There is a sense, unlike some of the theoretical concepts that MBA students frequently focus on, that these stacks provide practical knowledge that is immediately identified under the label of "this is something I'm really going to need and use."

Discussion and Conclusions

There are many HyperCard programs and there is even a greater number of textbooks which address language for business purposes. What is unique in development of these materials is to look back and see the cooperation between the Business School and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. These computer materials are not extremely technical, but there is nobody in our Business School who is working in this area. Their focus is simply in management and administration. At the same time, there is nobody in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese who automatically would be working in the area of developing

vocabulary materials for business students. These materials only exist because of the joint efforts made by each group.

The title of this article includes "Bridging the Gap" because in a real sense the development of these computer materials was an experiment to see whether a project between the Business School and the language departments could be for the benefit of both involved. A brief list of the benefits to date will help illustrate that the answer is affirmative:

Benefits for the Liberal Arts College

- Increased summer employment options for language faculty and language graduate students.
- New computers and equipment for language departments.
- Business School sponsored conference participation for language faculty.
- Expanded relationship with local Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
- Increased contact with Business language instructors at other institutions.
- Increased teaching opportunities for language faculty and language graduate students within the community.
- Expansion of the program to other departments, e.g., German, French, Japanese.

Benefits for the Business School

- Graduate students in international business now have personal language courses.
- Access to new teaching materials based on identified needs.
- Increased motivation of the graduate students in international business.
- Better relations with the Liberal Arts College.
- Progress in this area has aided in new grant proposal for future projects.

We have now entered into a second phase where French and German programs for MBA students will be offered next semester. In Spanish we are increasing the options by offering an intensive summer program to teach beginning Spanish to MBA students. Once again this

accelerated language program is being developed with the same exchange and cooperation between the two colleges. The Business School identifies the needs, helps provide funds to develop the course, and coordinates activities with the community. The Department of Spanish and Portuguese, in turn, has been given a new pool of students which opens up employment and experience for language instructors and our graduate students. Our experience together generates new hope that we may bridge the gap between the Business School and the Liberal Arts College.

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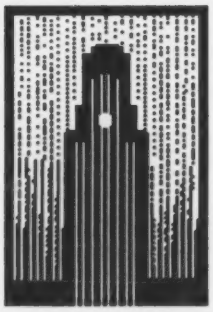
Lambert, Richard D. 1992. Business Education and Liberal Arts. Address given at the Second Annual UCLA Conference on Integration of Foreign Languages and Culture Education with Studies in Business and Economics, Feb. 7-8, 1992.

Figure 1. Title page of "Un día típico de trabajo"



Un día típico de trabajo

Vocabulary Practice and Review for Business Spanish

Center for International Business Education and Research

BY

Orlando R. Kelm
University of Texas, Austin

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Introduction and Help

1. National Car Rental
2. Banco de Lara
3. Seguros Cordillera
4. Inmovivienca (Bienes Raíces)
5. Chestnut Hill Farms de Venezuela
6. Lo Novedoso del Bambú

To begin click on the name of the company you wish to study.

To exit the program and quit click anywhere on the tower.

Figure 2. Sample page of a company Table of Contents

Chestnut Hill Farms de Venezuela

Betty Leal
(Jefe de Ventas)

Marcos Leal
(Administrador)

Sonia Teresa M. de Salas
(Contralor)

Guillermo Albornoz
(Jefe de Planta)

Janeth J. Gil Mezu
(Jefe de Personal)

María Virginia Valecillos
(Contador)

Justina Coromoto García
(Laboratorista)

María Rondón
(Sec. de Contabilidad)

Pulse el nombre de la persona que usted desea estudiar.

Main Menu

Previous Card

Next Card

Fig. 2

Figure 3. Sample card of employee transcripts

Chestnut Hill Farms

Sonia T. M. de Salas
Contralor
Caracas, Venezuela

1 de 8 tarjetas

Pulse una palabra para su traducción. ☞

Ya, este, mi trabajo y mi responsabilidad en la empresa es la de **contralor**. El contralor es la persone que, este, en realidad controla todo la, lo referente al **área contable**, ¿no? El área contable es la **encargada** de, este, **emitir** reportes, **mensuales** a la **casa matriz**. Y yo soy la encargada de, de, de hacer los **procedimientos**, los controles para que todos los procedimientos, este, el su resultado final sea el, el más **idóneo**, ¿no? Y los resultados que están en detalle en las **cifras contables** sean los más exactos posibles. Yo como contralor, este, estoy encargada directamente del departamento de contabilidad, donde están centralizado todo lo que es la el área de **nóminas** de la **empresa** la área netamente contable, la área de supervisión a nivel de los **insumos** que que lleguen, los insumos que se cancelen las **facturas** a los **proveedores**.

SALIDA | Empleados | | | Traducción | Pronuncia | Lenguaje | Gramática | Ayuda

Fig 3

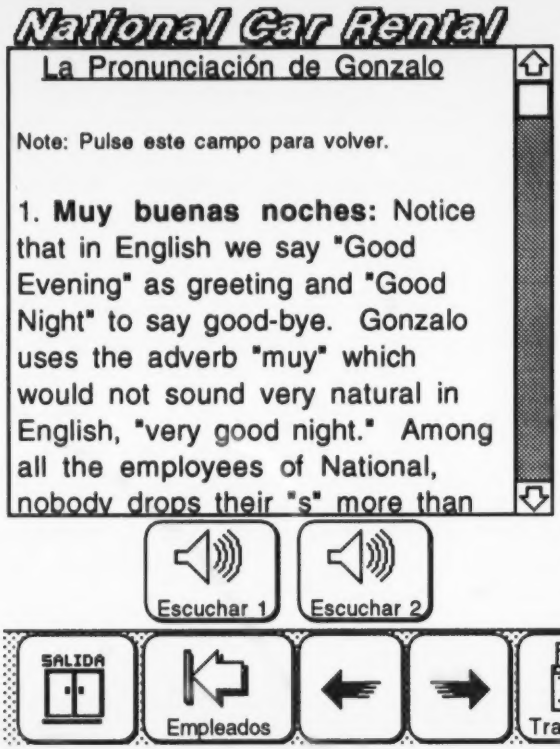
Figure 4. Sample card showing the translation field

To begin, good morning, my name is Liliana del Carmen Toro. What follows is the question, describe in detail the responsibilities that you have in your work. My job, the work I do is as the receptionist and at the same time as the management secretary. The second question, describe in details the activities of a typical work day. To function as the receptionist means to take calls and to make calls both to the central office in Caracas as well as the agencies or branches in question. A typical day: taking care of the public, the productores, complaints, management, the other associates.
What is the part of work that you like most and why?

Antes todo, buenos días, mi nombre es Liliana del Carmen Toro. A continuación me preguntan, describir en detalle las responsabilidades que usted tiene en su trabajo. Mi mi **labor**, mi **cargo** a **desempeñar** es como **recepcionista** y al mismo tiempo secretaria de gerencia. La segunda pregunta, describir en detalles las actividades de un día típico de trabajo. **Fungir** como recepcionista es **la atención de llamadas** y el **hacer llamadas** tanto a la **sede** principal de Caracas como a las **agencias** o **sucursales** en cuestión. Un día típico la atención al público, productores, **inquietudes**, **gerencias**, demás compañeros, en fin.
¿Cuál es la parte del trabajo que más le gusta y por qué?

F3 4

Figure 5. Sample card showing the usage field


National Car Rental
La Pronunciación de Gonzalo
Note: Pulse este campo para volver.
1. **Muy buenas noches:** Notice that in English we say "Good Evening" as greeting and "Good Night" to say good-bye. Gonzalo uses the adverb "muy" which would not sound very natural in English, "very good night." Among all the employees of National, nobody drops their "s" more than
Escuchar 1
Escuchar 2

Muy buenas noches, mi nombre es Gonzalo Vera Aguilar. Soy **gerente** de las National Car Rental en el estado Mérida. Mi responsabilidad es **tratar de alquilar** vehículos a los **clientes, mantenerlos** satisfechos sobre el trabajo de los vehículos, **llevar el control** sobre los catorce **empleados** que tengo mi, a mi orden, **tratar** de que todas las oficinas estén en orden, los carros. Llevar el control de lo, de las **entradas** en que se hacen **diariamente** en esta estación, **mensualmente** se hace un **balance de la producción** que se hace por renta de vehículo.

Los detalles de un día típico de trabajo son los siguientes. Entra uno a las ocho de la mañana, **chequea** los contratos si tienen **autorización** pedida por cada **tarjeta de crédito**, ver la presencia de los empleados, el **mantenimiento** de la oficina,

F. 5

Figure 6. Sample card showing the pronunciation field

Banco de Lara

El Lenguaje

Note: Pulse este campo para volver.

1. **uno se encarga de verificar:** The verb "encargarse de" is extremely useful, but also might feel abstract to most native English speakers, i.e., "to enjob yourself with." More accurately this verb means "to be in charge of" or "to be responsible for."

2. **recapitular lo del día:** The

Bueno, el resto es que se **atiende público** hasta las 11:30. A las 11:30 uno se encarga de verificar lo que **queda pendiente**, y a un cuarto para las doce nos vamos. **Antecito** de las dos de las tarde igualmente, ya después de las 4:30 de la tarde que es cuando se le cierra al público. Este, ahí empezamos a organizamos que si a a a, como se dice, a **recapitular** lo del día, que es, este, **acertar** en las records todo lo que se ha hecho durante el día. Eso es lo que me toca a mí, igual a el que se encarga, por ejemplo, de **cambio**, de **prueba** entonces, eso es lo que me toca amí. Vamos con la tercera.

¿Cuál es la parte del trabajo que más le gusta y porque? Me encanta atender al público, me encanta de verdad, me gusta, me gusta porque eso es lo que más he aprendido, porque es el **puesto** en el que he estado más tiempo.

Figure 7. Sample card showing the help section

Un día típico de trabajo

Each company stack provides a transcript of the employee's recording which is transcribed at right column of the card. The left column is reserved for pop-up windows which provide additional information regarding grammar, usage, translation and pronunciation. Click one of the buttons below for details.

Grammar Button

When you click on this button a field will appear in the left column which provides an English description of some of the major grammatical points that are illustrated by the employee's comments. Click anywhere in the field to return to the card.

Click here for company information.

Click here to return.

Fig. 7